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TAGS: PREL MARR MASS CH AF XD SO RS TW KN IZ XA
SUBJECT: DASD SEDNEY'S MEETING WITH COMMUNIST PARTY
INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT VICE MINISTER ZHANG ZHIJUN

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson. Reasons 1.4
(B) and (D).

Summary

¶1. (C) Vice Minister of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee International Department (CCID) Zhang Zhijun told Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) David Sedney December 18 that China "treasures" its relationship with the United States and considers the U.S.-China relationship to be the "most important" of all its bilateral relationships. He added that trade and economic ties should "expand" and sensitive issues such as Tibet and Taiwan should be "looked at carefully" by the United States. Zhang asked whether China could expect a "timeframe" in which the United States would agree to halt arms sales to Taiwan. Zhang urged all parties to the Six-Party Talks on the North Korea nuclear issue to continue to "show flexibility" and not "lose patience" so that the Talks can continue. VM Zhang declined to say whether China will purchase Russian Su-35 fighter planes and shared thoughts on Somali piracy, Sino-Russian ties and Afghanistan. End Summary.

U.S.-China Military Relations

¶2. (C) VM Zhang told DASD Sedney that China "treasures" its relationship with the United States and that it considers the U.S.-China relationship to be the most important of all its bilateral relationships. He expressed hope that the relationship is further strengthened under the new administration and that mutual trust will increase through high-level exchanges.

¶3. (C) Trade and economic ties should expand, said Zhang, and sensitive issues such as Tibet and Taiwan should be "looked at carefully" by the United States. If such issues "harm the core interests" of China, he noted, China must "respond and react" so that these issues do not "explode." Exchange and cooperation on international issues are key so that we avoid misunderstandings and so that the "many shared interests" of the United States and China can determine the future course of the bilateral relationship, he noted. VM Zhang expressed hope these interests would "continue to grow" under the new administration.

¶4. (C) DASD Sedney emphasized the need to enhance the bilateral strategic dialogue to avoid misunderstandings and expand cooperation. Shared concerns on issues such as piracy, terrorism and Pakistan's fragility need to be discussed on a military as well as political level, he stated.

South Asia

15. (C) Progress toward "peace and stability" in South Asia is a goal shared by the United States and China, agreed VM Zhang. The priorities for the United States, as he understands them, are multiple. The economy, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and climate change seem to be at the forefront of policymakers' agendas in Washington, claimed VM Zhang, noting that all of these issues are long-term and will take time to "manage."

Somali Piracy

16. (C) DASD Sedney and VM Zhang agreed that the piracy situation off the Somali coast is worsening and is a major international problem. Zhang claimed that some experts in Washington have urged China not to send naval vessels to Somalia, a point which Sedney was quick to counter by pointing out that the United States Government "welcomes" China's participation in the international effort to combat piracy and was pleased to hear Vice Foreign Minister He Yafei's recent comments in New York addressing ways in which the international response could be coordinated.

Afghanistan

17. (C) DASD Sedney expressed Secretary Gates's belief that
BEIJING 00000057 002 OF 003

the only way to succeed in Afghanistan is to assist the Afghan Government in providing security and stability for its people. This issue represents a "common interest" between China and the United States, he underscored. As the United States sends more troops and increases civil military cooperation across the country, it also "appreciates" China's contributions to Afghanistan's reconstruction, such as its investment in irrigation projects north of Kabul. China wants to see peace and stability in Afghanistan, VM Zhang replied, and "all efforts will be made" toward this objective. China hopes that the United States will continue its "consultation" with China on Afghanistan, said VM Zhang.

Taiwan

18. (C) Ideally, China would like the United States to cease selling arms to Taiwan, said VM Zhang, but understands that the sales continue "for historical reasons." VM Zhang asked whether there is a specific "timeframe" during which China could expect this behavior to end. Perhaps a compromise could be "worked out" based on the 1982 Communique, he suggested.

19. (C) The cross-Strait security situation over the past 30 years has been "generally positive," replied DASD Sedney, adding that there has been an increase in cross-Strait ties and that the steps taken in recent months have been "encouraging" and represent an "historic opportunity" to further develop those ties. VM Zhang agreed, noting that the current situation is "what China has been pushing for," but stated that the selling of arms by the United States violates the one China policy as well as China's core interests.

110. (C) DASD Sedney replied that despite recent progress in U.S-China relations, security cooperation lags behind other facets of the relationship. The 1982 Communique was predicated on a move toward a peaceful solution, but that solution has not come, DASD Sedney said. On the one hand, China is "reaching out" to Taiwan, he stressed, but on the other, it is threatening to hit it with a "club."

111. (C) VM Zhang replied that China is a big country and that

every "sovereign nation" has a right to defend its territory.

He added that Taiwan is a part of China and it is impossible to say that a "military balance" is needed between two parts of the same country. Furthermore, said VM Zhang, China does not want to see U.S. "involvement" in China's relationship with Taiwan lest China be forced to "break off" military-to-military relations. Sedney urged discussing Taiwan in a "responsible and restrained" manner and working toward a "peaceful resolution" of the issue.

Sino-Russian Ties, SCO

¶12. (C) Turning to Russia's "disproportionate" response to the conflict in Georgia's South Ossetia region, DASD Sedney suggested that this is the type of issue that the United States and China should be discussing in strategic talks. Russia feels it has been "pushed around" and that its "strategic space" has been threatened, replied VM Zhang. The solution, he added, is to engage Russia in a more constructive way to build confidence and trust. VM Zhang said he hopes to see improvements but that improvements depend on "good cooperation."

¶13. (C) VM Zhang explained that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was created to establish a new concept of security based on mutual trust on issues such as energy cooperation and combating terrorism. The objective, he added, is not to position China as a "counterweight" to Russia in the former Soviet republics.

North Korea

¶14. (C) DASD Sedney expressed U.S. disappointment in the latest (December) round of Six-Party Talks. VM Zhang replied that China also wants to see "peace and stability" in the region and that "substantial progress" has been made, China's role has been "constructive," and it will continue its efforts. It is important that all sides continue to "show

BEIJING 00000057 003 OF 003

flexibility" and not "lose patience," as there is "no other way," he maintained. Past rounds have shown that during times of stalemate, new efforts were applied and the talks continued, VM Zhang added, so China "hopes that talks will continue."

AFRICOM

¶15. (C) VM Zhang inquired about the mission for U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), wondering whether it will focus on combating terrorism, developing infrastructure, security training, or other objectives. Defense Attaché BG Hooper replied that AFRICOM's role is to "build stability" on all fronts, not just militarily. VM Zhang said he thought the Pentagon was moving away from certain activities deemed inappropriate for the military and wondered why AFRICOM is taking on such a role.

Defense Funding

¶16. (C) When asked whether the United States will acquire more F-22 fighter planes, DASD Sedney urged VM Zhang to disclose whether or not China plans to purchase Russian Su-35 fighter planes and noted that although information on U.S. defense spending is clear and publicly available, "no one knows" what China's military plans are.

¶17. (U) DASD Sedney cleared this message.
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